

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

**SPECTACULAR DOUBLE BILL:
LES GRANDS BALLETS CANADIENS DE MONTRÉAL STAGE NEW
WORK BY STIJN CELIS AND A REPRISE OF SHEN WEI'S *RE-, II*
IMAGINATION IS ON THE AGENDA!**

Montréal, April 29, 2008 – Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal serves up an exciting double bill: a new work by Stijn Celis, who staged the extraordinary *Noces* in 2002 and an equally astonishing *Cinderella* in 2007; and *Re-, II* by Shen Wei, an unqualified critical success when it debuted in 2007. This dynamic duo comes to **Place des Arts' Théâtre Maisonneuve on March 26, 27, 28 and April 2, 3, 4 2009**. This surprising and moving voyage in the company of two key figures in contemporary dance puts imagination on the agenda!

STIJN CELIS: SURPRISES IN STORE

With Celis' latest (and highly anticipated) work—a world premiere created exclusively for Les Grands Ballets—you might well wonder what the choreographer has in store this time. One thing is certain: with Celis, anything can happen! In *Noces*, which the GBCM toured to rave reviews, 24 dancers strut, pose, and brutally challenge each other at a Balkan peasant wedding. Expressionistic and deliriously intense, *Noces* was described as “extraordinary” by *The New York Times*. In 2007, Celis was back with a new reading of *Cinderella*. First created in 2003, *Celle qui, dit-on, aurait perdu sa chaussure (Cendrillon)* was hailed as a “highly unconventional ballet that deserves kudos for its audacity” (*Le Devoir*), and “superb, humorous, subtle, highly colourful and full of surprises” (*La Presse*). A change of scene is guaranteed with this bold choreographer, the darling of European dance, who likes nothing better than to dismantle tradition and myth.

Born in Belgium in 1964, Celis is one of the most active artists in European contemporary dance today. In 2001, the influential magazine *Ballettanz* declared him the year's most promising young choreographer. Celis danced until 1997 with such companies as the Royal Ballet of Flanders, the Zurich Ballet, the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève and the Cullberg Ballet. In 1997, he turned to set design and choreography. He created many works for the Ballet Gulbenkian, Ballet Mainz, Ballet Wiesbaden, Ballet Nuremberg, Cullberg Ballet, Icelandic Ballet, and I.T. Dansa Barcelona. From 2004 to summer 2007, he was artistic director of the Bern Ballet. His innovative 2006 reworking of *Swan Lake* received much critical acclaim. In 2007, he choreographed a solo for Julie Guibert as part of the *Sujet à vif* program in the Festival d'Avignon.

***RE-, II*: REVELATION REVEALED ANEW**

Re-, II, a piece for 16 dancers, was first created for Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal by Wei in March 2007. Wei had presented *Re-, I*, a work inspired by a voyage to Tibet and created for his company, Shen Wei Dance Arts, at the 2006 American Dance Festival. Echoing this work, *Re-, II* stems from impressions the choreographer took away from a visit to Angkor Wat, the largest and most harmonious of the temples in Angkor, Cambodia. “*Re-, II* reflects my impressions of temples, trees, ambient noise, children and the country's culture,” said Wei. Jungle sounds recorded by Wei himself, together with the traditional Cambodian music of Moon Band, a local group of disabled artists, form part of the piece's soundscape; additional music is supplied by composer John Tavener. *Re-, II* also features striking photographs taken by Wei that evoke the artistic richness of the site.



Montréalers first discovered Wei in 2006 when he and his company were special guests of Les Grands Ballets. *The Shen Wei Experience* fascinated audiences as it plunged them a strange and meditative world. *Re-, II* had a similar revelatory effect on audiences and critics alike when it was first performed last year. "It's been a long time since Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal have presented dance so atypical, so totally different from their usual vocabulary. At yesterday's premiere of *Re-, II*, it was a real joy to see them transport the audience into another world ... The final movement veritably froze audiences to their seats with its singular beauty" (*Le Devoir*). "*Re-, II* borders on true greatness. This piece promises to be one of the troupe's most heroic feats. From the start, Shen Wei creates a world, a state of being... *Re-, II* ... resonates with otherness, the unusual, the unexpected, leaving the viewer at peace, yet pensive. One exits hypnotized, as if leaving a place where no human being has ever set foot—which says something on the prowess of the 16 dancers. Visually striking and spiritual, accessible and foreign, contemporary and timeless, *Re-, II* is a moment of experience that leaves indelible images." (*La Presse*)

SHEN WEI

Born in China, Shen Wei has made the landscape of contemporary dance his primary medium. In summer 2008, his choreography will feature in the opening ceremony of the 29th Olympic Games in Beijing. In 2007, he received a MacArthur Fellowship, a prestigious award disbursed over five years that honours American artists of exceptional creativity. Wei founded his company, Shen Wei Dance Arts, in New York in 2000. Choreographer, dancer, painter, director and set designer, he deploys the full range of his talents in his work, a unique fusion of Chinese opera and modern dance that is gaining increasing renown both in the United States and internationally, where it is hailed from London to Sydney. The *Washington Post* called him "one of modern dance's most important new voices"; *The New York Times* pointed up "the advent of a strikingly original artist who fits into no familiar category." Wei's work has been commissioned by many major American and international institutions. Venues that have presented his pieces include the Hong Kong New Visions Arts Festival, the Montpellier Dance Festival, the Lincoln Center Festival, the Venice Biennale, the Sydney Opera House and the Sadler's Wells in London.

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal

New Work by Stijn Celis

and *Re-, II* by Shen Wei

March 26, 27, 28 and April 2, 3, 4, 2009

Théâtre Maisonneuve, Place des Arts

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